



**Los Angeles County
Department of Children and Family Services
Permanency Partners Program (P3)
Fact Sheet**



History of the Permanency Partners Program

In 2003 Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services in collaboration with the Commission for Children and Families, hired consultant Dr. Sharon Watson to prepare a report on an overarching permanency plan for older foster youth. Dr. Watson presented her report in March 2004, after interviewing both staff and community partners, in addition to researching emerging permanency work across the county. The report recommended a demonstration project modeled after Stanislaus County's "Cold Case Cowboy" experiment where retired police detectives returned to their former department to solve old unresolved murder cases, one at a time. Dr. Watson suggested that an older youth permanency pilot could be developed utilizing retired social workers, who had previous experience within the Department; who were familiar with the laws and policies; knew how to navigate our systems; and would have "face validity" with current social workers. These Permanency Workers could do the legwork on our "cold cases". Most important, they would have time to focus exclusively on finding permanency for youth who had been in foster care for an extensive period of time.

While the funding and logistics for the hiring of retired staff were being developed, DCFS Director Patricia Ploehn attended the 2004 California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) Convening and connected with Kate Cleary, Executive Director of the non-profit group Consortium for Children. Both were inspired by the convening and felt compelled to start doing something immediately to address the need older foster youth had for permanent families. They started to look for ways both organizations could collaborate. The Consortium had an existing contract with the State of California to provide permanency planning mediation services for California counties. Ms. Cleary went back to the State with the support of Los Angeles County, to request that a portion of these funds be available to pilot family finding on a small scale in Los Angeles. The state granted the request and in October 2004, the P3 pilot program began in one office with 50 youth identified to participate. The Consortium provided trained certified mediators, with prior child welfare experience, to work with the DCFS project manager to provide services to these youth.

In April 2005, the Department was able to implement the internal P3 pilot by hiring 20 retired social workers to provide P3 services to youth in eight offices. The Consortium for Children provided the initial training for these retirees and the Department was able to use the lessons learned from the Consortium to further improve our internal processes. The Consortium was gradually phased out of the P3 program by 2006 as they completed work on the youth identified for their pilot. Around this same time period, the internal DCFS P3 program was expanded to include all DCFS offices and staffing was increased to 80 part-time CSWs and 12 part-time SCSWs. At this time the program was also able to expand hiring to include both retired DCFS staff and part-time positions for those employees who had previously worked with for the department but had not officially retired.

Role of the P3 CSW

P3 focuses on youth between the ages of 12 and 18, who are in Planned Permanent Living Arrangements, formerly known as “Long Term Foster Care.” P3 also services case siblings of the above population, regardless of age, as well as a number of youth that have been Court ordered for P3 Services. P3 assigns a youth to a P3 CSW, who then seeks to locate meaningful connections from the youth’s past/present, with the ultimate goal of achieving life long permanence, possibly through reunification with a parent, or through adoption or guardianship. P3 also seeks to identify and locate adult connections with whom the youth can develop lasting relationships, hopefully throughout the youth’s life.

The P3 CSW assumes secondary assignment on the cases they service and they perform the following activities:

- Read the case records in order to identify previously missing significant connections in the child’s life.
- Regularly collaborate with regional staff through face-to-face conferencing, e-mails, and written documentation.
- Collaborate with the youth to explore the youth’s wishes and desires and to follow up on leads obtained from the youth regarding the identities of missing connections.
- Utilize Due Diligence and Internet search engines to locate the missing connections.
- Conduct in-person and telephone contact with the identified connections, once located.
- Assist with setting up initial contacts between the youth and connections and provide on-going support to both the youth and the connections while the relationship is developing.
- Work in conjunction with the primary CSW, the youth and the adult connection to explore permanency options.
- Assist with referrals to Departmental resources such as Adoption Safe Family Act (ASFA) for relative/NREFM home assessments, Team Decision Making, Family Group Decision Making, Family Preservation, and elsewhere as needed.

Results

As of December 2007, P3 has provided P3 services to 2311 youth. Approximately, 32% (747) of the youth now have a legally permanent plan identified or established. A total of 76 youth have returned home to a parent and had their child welfare case closed, 23 youth have returned home and continue to have their case supervised by DCFS and 79 are moving towards reunification with a parent. In addition, 12 youth have been adopted, 9 youth are in adoptive placements, and 214 youth who were previously opposed to adoption are now involved in adoption planning. Finally, 30 youth have had a legal guardian appointed and their cases closed through KinGAP, 90 youth are in legal guardianship and continue to have their case supervised by DCFS, and 214 youth have a plan of legal guardianship identified and are moving through the court process.

AWOL Youth Assignment

In January 2006 the P3 program began working on a temporary basis with all under 18 AWOL youth throughout the county. In addition to providing traditional P3 services to these youth, P3 CSWs assisted the case carrying CSWs in locating runaway youth and supported permanency planning. Once found, the P3 staff worked with the youth, the worker, and the family in an attempt to locate a placement resource that would not only safely bring the youth back off the street, but one that could offer the youth a true chance at permanency. In March 2008, work with AWOL youth was transitioned to the Runaway Outreach Unit, a specialized secondary unit of full time social workers that would be able to provide P3 work in addition to other services. During

the two year span that P3 provided AWOL services, there was a reduction of 209 (42%) AWOL youth, from 505 AWOL youth in January 2006, to 296 in February.

Reviews

The P3 program was profiled as an innovative example of a Foster-Adopt Recruitment Initiative in the 2005 Adoption Day Report “Foster Care in the United States: An Analysis of Interest in Adoption and a Review of State Recruitment Strategies” prepared by the Urban Institute Child Welfare Research Program. A copy of the report can be obtained at the following link:

http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/411254_foster_care_adoption.pdf.

The P3 program is also featured in the “California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP) 2005 National Convening on Youth Permanency, Model Programs Update”. This is an addendum to the “Model Programs for Youth Permanency” booklet written the previous year. A copy of the addendum can be obtained at <http://cpyp.org/Files/ModelProgramsUpdate.pdf>

The P3 program was also included in California Department of Social Services 2006 release, “Child Welfare Services System Improvement, 11 County Pilot Implementation Evaluation, Initial Assessment Phase, July 2003 to June 2006” which was prepared by the Child and Family Policy Institute of California under contract with California Department of Social Services, Children and Family Services Division. A copy of the report can be obtained at the following link:

http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/pdf/11_County_eval_phase1.pdf

Awards

August 2006- National Associations of Counties (NACo) 2006 Achievement Award winner.

In 1970 the National Associations of Counties began an Annual Achievement Award Program to recognize innovative county government programs. The program was developed to nationally recognize county accomplishments and develop a repository of promising programs that could be shared with other counties.

August 2006- 20th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program –Commissioners’ Memorial Award

The Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission, is dedicated to highlighting the outstanding achievement of Los Angeles County Departments efforts to enhance the quality of services they provide to residents of Los Angeles County. Since 1987, this program has honored more than 2,000 individual departmental productivity and quality improvement efforts deserving of recognition by the Board of Supervisors, the Quality and Productivity Commission, and the public. The P3 program won the special Commissioners’ Memorial Award which is awarded to programs that show a commitment to program quality and productivity excellence.

2007-Semi-Finalist - Ash Institute, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University Innovations in American Government Award

One of seven finalists competing in a special category to receive the prestigious Annie E. Casey Innovations in American Government Award in Children and Family Service Reform. The seven programs were chosen for their novelty and exceptional efforts, effectiveness in addressing significant problems and potential for replication by other government entities.